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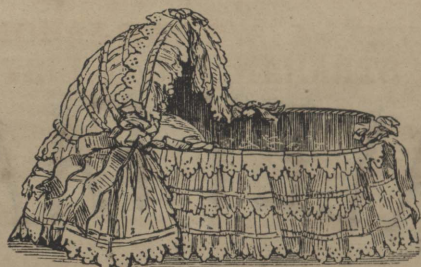
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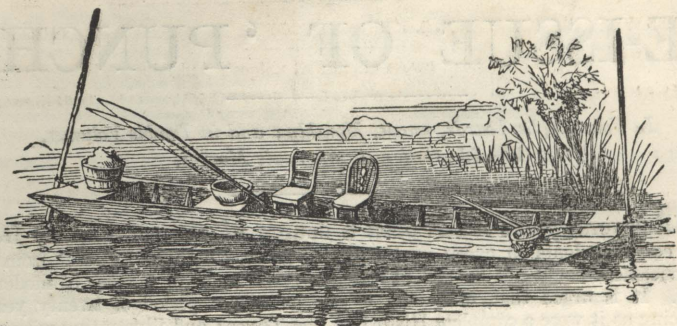
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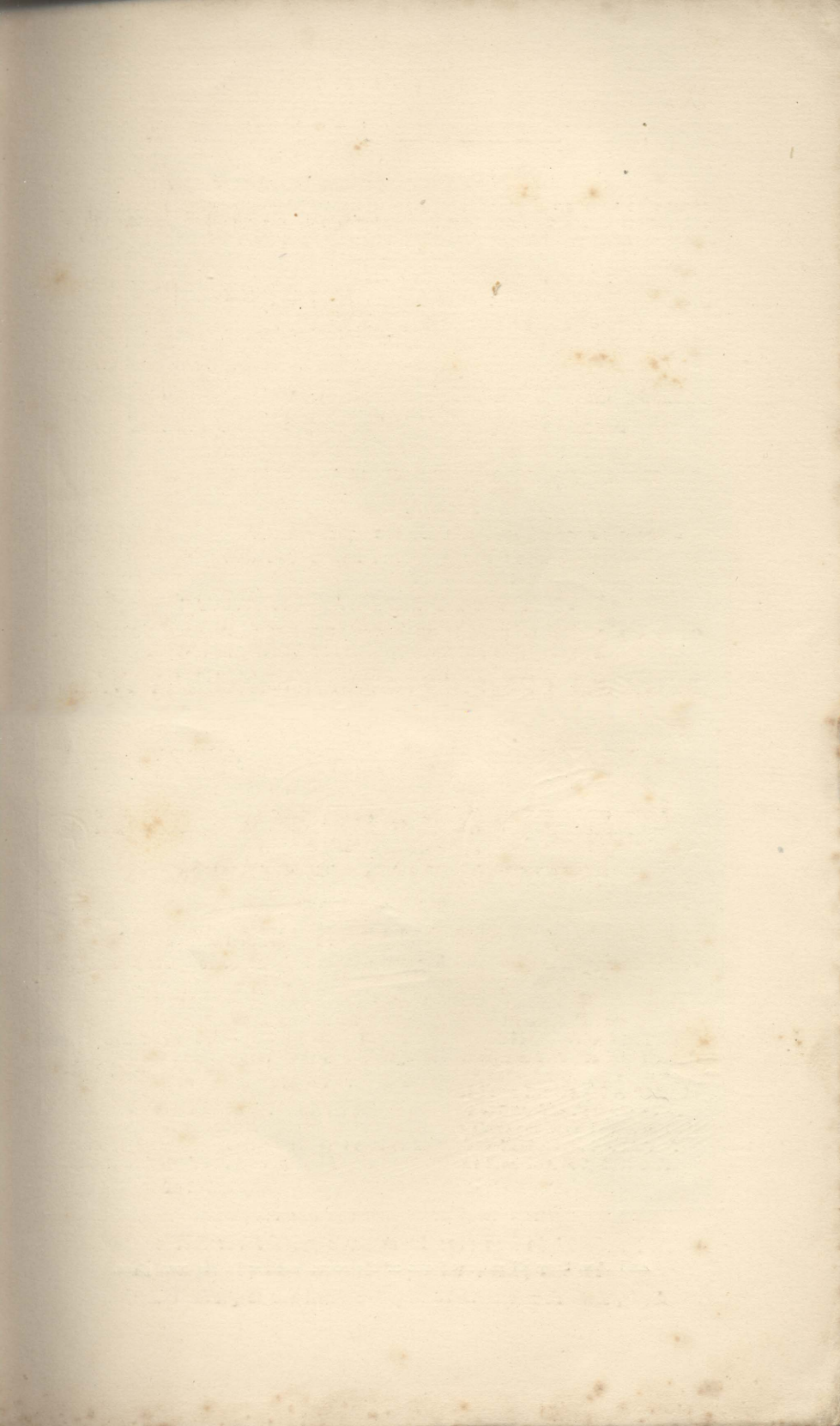
On FOX'S PARAGON FRAMES, in all qualities and sizes.



W. & J. SANGSTER,

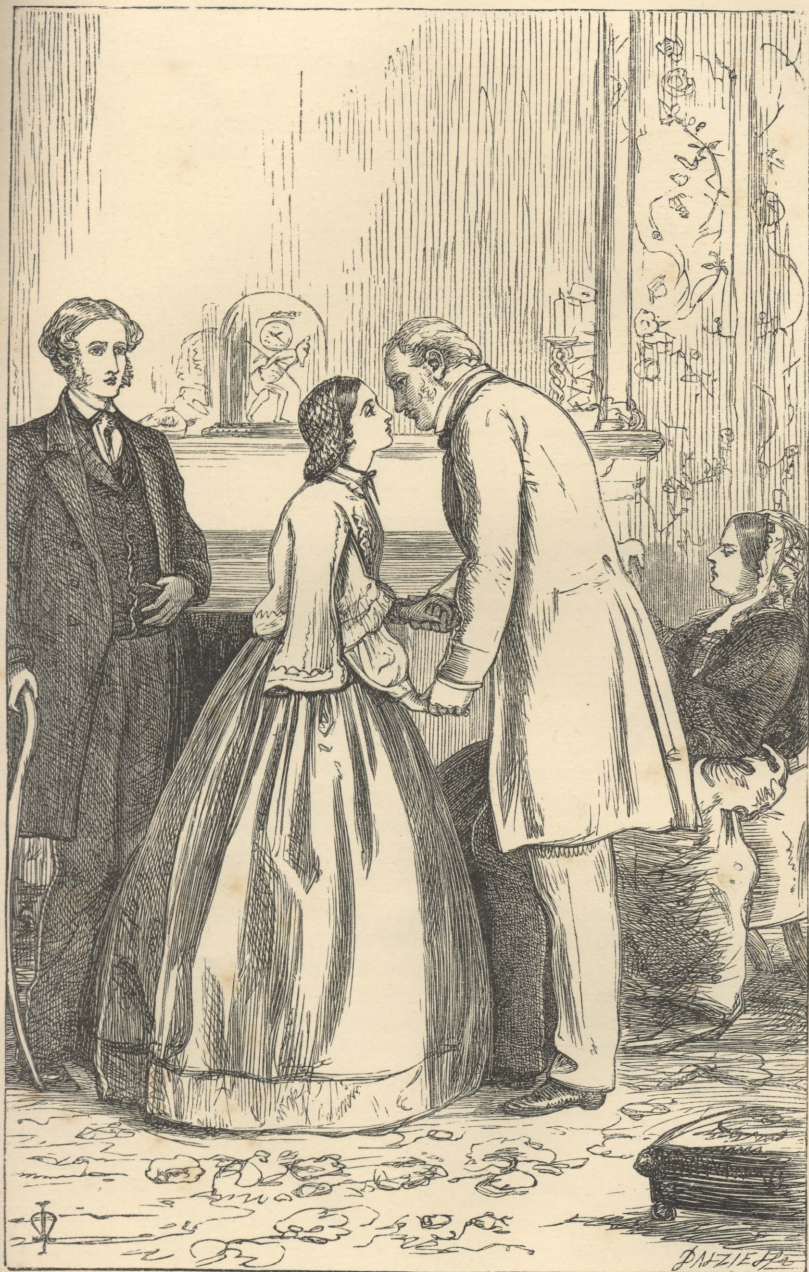
140 REGENT STREET, W.
94 FLEET STREET, E.C.

10 ROYAL EXCHANGE, E.C.
75 CHEAPSIDE, E.C.





And then they all marched out of the room each with his own glass.



Mr. Furnival's welcome home.

CHAPTER IX.

A CONVIVIAL MEETING.

On the whole Mr. Dockwrath was satisfied with the results of his trip to Groby Park, and was in a contented frame of mind as he was driven back to Leeds. No doubt it would have been better could he have persuaded Mr. Mason to throw over Messrs. Round and Crook, and put himself altogether into the hands of his new adviser; but this had been too much to expect. He had not expected it, and had made the suggestion as the surest means of getting the best terms in his power, rather than with a hope of securing the actual advantage named. He had done much towards impressing Mr. Mason with an idea of his own sharpness, and perhaps something also towards breaking the prestige which surrounded the names of the great London firm. He would now go to that firm and make his terms with them. They would probably be quite as ready to acquiesce in the importance of his information as had been Mr. Mason.

Before leaving the inn after breakfast he had agreed to join the dinner in the commercial room at five o'clock, and Mr. Mason's hot lunch had by no means induced him to alter his purpose. 'I shall dine here,' he had said when Mr. Moulder was discussing with the waiter the all-important subject of dinner. 'At the commercial table, sir?' the waiter had asked, doubtingly. Mr. Dockwrath had answered boldly in the affirmative, whereat Mr. Moulder had growled; but Mr. Kantwise had expressed his satisfaction. 'We shall be extremely happy to enjoy your company,' Mr. Kantwise had said, with a graceful bow, making up by his excessive courtesy for the want of any courtesy on the part of his brother-traveller. With reference to all this Mr. Moulder said nothing: the stranger had been admitted into the room, to a certain extent even with his own consent, and he could not now be turned out; but he resolved within his own mind that for the future he would be more firm in maintaining the ordinances and institutes of his profession.

On his road home Mr. Dockwrath had encountered Mr. Kantwise going to Groby Park, intent on his sale of a drawing-room set of the metallic furniture; and when he again met him in the commercial room he asked after his success. 'A wonderful woman that, Mr.

Dockwrath,' said Mr. Kantwise, 'a really wonderful woman; no particular friend of yours I think you say?'

'None in the least, Mr. Kantwise.'

'Then I may make bold to assert that for persevering sharpness she beats all that I ever met, even in Yorkshire;' and Mr. Kantwise looked at his new friend over his shoulder, and shook his head as though lost in wonder and admiration. 'What do you think she's done now?'

'She didn't give you much to eat, I take it.'

'Much to eat! I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Dockwrath; my belief is that that woman would have an absolute pleasure in starving a Christian; I do indeed. I'll tell you what she has done; she has made me put her up a set of them things at twelve, seventeen, six! I needn't tell you that they were never made for the money.'

'Why, then, did you part with them at a loss?'

'Well; that's the question. I was soft, I suppose. She got round me, badgering me, till I didn't know where I was. She wanted them as a present for the curate's wife, she said. Whatever should induce her to make a present!'

'She got them for twelve, seventeen, six; did she?' said Dockwrath, thinking that it might be as well to remember this, if he should feel inclined to make a purchase himself.

'But they was strained, Mr. Dockwrath; I must admit they was strained,—particularly the loo.'

'You had gone through your gymnastics on it a little too often?' asked the attorney. But this Mr. Kantwise would not acknowledge. The strength of that table was such that he could stand on it for ever without injury to it; but nevertheless, in some other way it had become strained, and therefore he had sold the set to Mrs. Mason for 12*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*, that lady being minded to make a costly present to the wife of the curate of Groby.

When dinner-time came Mr. Dockwrath found that the party was swelled to the number of eight, five other undoubted commercials having brought themselves to anchor at the Bull Inn during the day. To all of these Mr. Kantwise introduced him. 'Mr. Gape, Mr. Dockwrath,' said he, gracefully moving towards them the palm of his hand, and eyeing them over his shoulder. 'Mr. Gape is in the stationery line,' he added, in a whisper to the attorney, 'and does for Cumming and Jibber of St. Paul's Churchyard. Mr. Johnson, Mr. Dockwrath. Mr. J. is from Sheffield. Mr. Snengkeld, Mr. Dockwrath;' and then he imparted in another whisper the necessary information as to Mr. Snengkeld. 'Soft goods, for Brown Brothers, of Snow Hill,' and so on through the whole fraternity. Each member bowed as his name was mentioned; but they did not do so very graciously, as Mr. Kantwise was not a great man among them. Had the stranger been introduced to them by

Moulder,—Moulder the patriarch,—his reception among them would have been much warmer. And then they sat down to dinner, Mr. Moulder taking the chair as president, and Mr. Kantwise sitting opposite to him, as being the longest sojourner at the inn. Mr. Dockwrath sat at the right hand of Kantwise, discreetly avoiding the neighbourhood of Moulder, and the others ranged themselves according to fancy at the table. ‘Come up along side of me, old fellow,’ Moulder said to Snengkeld. ‘It aint the first time that you and I have smacked our lips together over the same bit of roast beef.’ ‘Nor won’t, I hope, be the last by a long chalk, Mr. Moulder,’ said Snengkeld, speaking with a deep, hoarse voice which seemed to ascend from some region of his body far below his chest. Moulder and Snengkeld were congenial spirits; but the latter, though the older man, was not endowed with so large a volume of body or so highly dominant a spirit. Brown Brothers, of Snow Hill, were substantial people, and Mr. Snengkeld travelled in strict accordance with the good old rules of trade which Moulder loved so well.

The politeness and general good manners of the company were something very pretty to witness. Mr. Dockwrath, as a stranger, was helped first, and every courtesy was shown to him. Even Mr. Moulder carved the beef for him with a loving hand, and Mr. Kantwise was almost subservient in his attention. Mr. Dockwrath thought that he had certainly done right in coming to the commercial table, and resolved on doing so on all occasions of future journeys. So far all was good. The commercial dinner, as he had ascertained, would cost him only two shillings, and a much inferior repast eaten by himself elsewhere would have stood in his bill for three. So far all was good; but the test by which he was to be tried was now approaching him.

When the dinner was just half over,—Mr. Moulder well knew how to mark the time—that gentleman called for the waiter, and whispered an important order into that functionary’s ears. The functionary bowed, retired from the room, and reappeared again in two minutes, bearing a bottle of sherry in each hand; one of these he deposited at the right hand of Mr. Moulder, and the other at the right hand of Mr. Kantwise.

‘Sir,’ said Mr. Moulder, addressing himself with great ceremony to Mr. Dockwrath, ‘the honour of a glass of wine with you, sir,’ and the president, to give more importance to the occasion, put down his knife and fork, leaned back in his chair, and put both his hands upon his waistcoat, looking intently at the attorney out of his little eyes.

Mr. Dockwrath was immediately aware that a crisis had come upon him which demanded an instant decision. If he complied with the president’s invitation he would have to pay his proportion

of all the wine bill that might be incurred that evening by the seven commercial gentlemen at the table, and he knew well that commercial gentlemen do sometimes call for bottle after bottle with a reckless disregard of expense. But to him, with his sixteen children, wine at an hotel was terrible. A pint of beer and a glass of brandy and water were the luxuries which he had promised himself, and with manly fortitude he resolved that he would not be coerced into extravagance by any president or any Moulder.

'Sir,' said he, 'I'm obliged by the honour, but I don't drink wine to my dinner.' Whereupon Mr. Moulder bowed his head very solemnly, winked at Snengkeld, and then drank wine with that gentleman.

'It's the rule of the room,' whispered Mr. Kantwise into Mr. Dockwrath's ear; but Mr. Dockwrath pretended not to hear him, and the matter was allowed to pass by for the time.

But Mr. Snengkeld asked him for the honour, as also did Mr. Gape, who sat at Moulder's left hand; and then Mr. Dockwrath began to wax angry. 'I think I remarked before that I don't drink wine to my dinner,' he said; and then the three at the president's end of the table all looked at each other very solemnly, and they all winked; and after that there was very little conversation during the remainder of the meal, for men knew that the goddess of discord was in the air.

The cheese came, and with that a bottle of port wine, which was handed round, Mr. Dockwrath of course refusing to join in the conviviality; and then the cloth was drawn, and the decanters were put before the president. 'James, bring me a little brandy and water,' said the attorney, striving to put a bold face on the matter, but yet speaking with diminished voice.

'Half a moment, if you please, sir,' said Moulder; and then he exclaimed with stentorian voice, 'James, the dinner bill.' 'Yes, sir,' said the waiter, and disappeared without any thought towards the requisition for brandy-and-water from Mr. Dockwrath.

For the next five minutes they all remained silent, except that Mr. Moulder gave the Queen's health as he filled his glass and pushed the bottles from him. 'Gentlemen, the Queen,' and then he lifted his glass of port up to the light, shut one eye as he looked at it, and immediately swallowed the contents as though he were taking a dose of physic. 'I'm afraid they'll charge you for the wine,' said Mr. Kantwise, again whispering to his neighbour. But Mr. Dockwrath paid no apparent attention to what was said to him. He was concentrating his energies with a view to the battle.

James, the waiter, soon returned. He also knew well what was about to happen, and he trembled as he handed in the document to the president. 'Let's have it, James,' said Moulder, with much pleasantry, as he took the paper in his hand. 'The old ticket

I suppose; five bob a head.' And then he read out the bill, the total of which, wine and beer included, came to forty shillings. 'Five shillings a head, gentlemen, as I said. You and I can make a pretty good guess as to the figure; eh, Snengkeld?' And then he put down his two half-crowns on the waiter, as also did Mr. Snengkeld, and then Mr. Gape, and so on till it came to Mr. Kantwise.

'I think you and I will leave it, and settle at the bar,' said Kantwise, appealing to Dockwrath, and intending peace if peace were still possible.

'No,' shouted Moulder, from the other end of the table; 'let the man have his money now, and then his troubles will be over. If there's to be any fuss about it, let's have it out. I like to see the dinner bill settled as soon as the dinner is eaten. Then one gets an appetite for one's supper.'

'I don't think I have the change,' said Kantwise, still putting off the evil day.

'I'll lend it you,' said Moulder, putting his hand into his trousers-pockets. But the money was forthcoming out of Mr. Kantwise's own proper repositories, and with slow motion he put down the five shillings one after the other.

And then the waiter came to Mr. Dockwrath. 'What's this?' said the attorney, taking up the bill and looking at it. The whole matter had been sufficiently explained to him, but nevertheless Mr. Moulder explained it again. 'In commercial rooms, sir, as no doubt you must be well aware, seeing that you have done us the honour of joining us here, the dinner bill is divided equally among all the gentlemen as sit down. It's the rule of the room, sir. You has what you like, and you calls for what you like, and conviviality is thereby encouraged. The figure generally comes to five shillings, and you afterwards gives what you like to the waiter. That's about it, aint it, James?'

'That's the rule, sir, in all commercial rooms as I ever see,' said the waiter.

The matter had been so extremely well put by Mr. Moulder, and that gentleman's words had carried with them so much conviction, that Dockwrath felt himself almost tempted to put down the money: as far as his sixteen children and general ideas of economy were concerned he would have done so; but his legal mind could not bear to be beaten. The spirit of litigation within him told him that the point was to be carried. Moulder, Gape, and Snengkeld together could not make him pay for wine he had neither ordered nor swallowed. His pocket was guarded by the law of the land, and not by the laws of any special room in which he might chance to find himself. 'I shall pay two shillings for my dinner,' said he, 'and sixpence for my beer;' and then he deposited the half-crown.

‘Do you mean us to understand,’ said Moulder, ‘that after forcing your way into this room, and sitting down along with gentlemen at this table, you refuse to abide by the rules of the room?’ And Mr. Moulder spoke and looked as though he thought that such treachery must certainly lead to most disastrous results. The disastrous result which a stranger might have expected at the moment would be a fit of apoplexy on the part of the worthy president.

‘I neither ordered that wine nor did I drink it,’ said Mr. Dock-wrath, compressing his lips, leaning back in his chair, and looking up into one corner of the ceiling.

‘The gentleman certainly did not drink the wine,’ said Kantwise, ‘I must acknowledge that; and as for ordering it, why that was done by the president, in course.’

‘Gammon!’ said Mr. Moulder, and he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon his Vice. ‘Kantwise, that’s gammon. The most of what you says is gammon.’

‘Mr. Moulder, I don’t exactly know what you mean by that word gammon, but it’s objectionable. To my feelings it’s very objectionable. I say that the gentleman did not drink the wine, and I appeal to the gentleman who sits at the gentleman’s right, whether what I say is not correct. If what I say is correct, it can’t be—gammon. Mr. Busby, did the gentleman drink the wine, or did he not?’

‘Not as I see,’ said Mr. Busby, somewhat nervous at being thus brought into the controversy. He was a young man just commencing his travels, and stood in awe of the great Moulder.

‘Gammon!’ shouted Moulder, with a very red face. ‘Everybody at the table knows he didn’t drink the wine. Everybody saw that he declined the honour when proposed, which I don’t know that I ever saw a gentleman do at a commercial table till this day, barring that he was a teetotaller, which is gammon too. But its P. P. here, as every commercial gentleman knows, Kantwise as well as the best of us.’

‘P. P., that’s the rule,’ growled Snengkeld, almost from under the table.

‘In commercial rooms, as the gentleman must be aware, the rule is as stated by my friend on my right,’ said Mr. Gape. ‘The wine is ordered by the president or chairman, and is paid for in equal proportions by the company or guests,’ and in his oratory Mr. Gape laid great stress on the word ‘or.’ ‘The gentleman will easily perceive that such a rule as this is necessary in such a society; and unless—’

But Mr. Gape was apt to make long speeches, and therefore Mr. Moulder interrupted him. ‘You had better pay your five shillings, sir, and have no jaw about it. The man is standing idle there.’

'It's not the value of the money,' said Dockwrath, 'but I must decline to acknowledge that I am amenable to the jurisdiction.'

'There has clearly been a mistake,' said Johnson from Sheffield, 'and we had better settle it among us; anything is better than a row.' Johnson from Sheffield was a man somewhat inclined to dispute the supremacy of Moulder from Houndsditch.

'No, Johnson,' said the president. 'Anything is not better than a row. A premeditated infraction of our rules is not better than a row.'

'Did you say premeditated?' said Kantwise. 'I think not premeditated.'

'I did say premeditated, and I say it again.'

'It looks uncommon like it,' said Snengkeld.

'When a gentleman,' said Gape, 'who does not belong to a society—'

'It's no good having more talk,' said Moulder, 'and we'll soon bring this to an end. Mr. —; I haven't the honour of knowing the gentleman's name.'

'My name is Dockwrath, and I am a solicitor.'

'Oh, a solicitor; are you? and you said last night you was commercial! Will you be good enough to tell us, Mr. Solicitor—for I didn't just catch your name, except that it begins with a dock—and that's where most of your clients are to be found, I suppose—'

'Order, order, order!' said Kantwise, holding up both his hands.

'It's the chair as is speaking,' said Mr. Gape, who had a true Englishman's notion that the chair itself could not be called to order.

'You shouldn't insult the gentleman because he has his own ideas,' said Johnson.

'I don't want to insult no one,' continued Moulder; 'and those who know me best, among whom I can't as yet count Mr. Johnson, though hopes I shall some day, won't say it of me.' 'Hear—hear—hear!' from both Snengkeld and Gape; to which Kantwise added a little 'hear—hear!' of his own, of which Mr. Moulder did not quite approve. 'Mr. Snengkeld and Mr. Gape, they're my old friends, and they knows me. And they knows the way of a commercial room—which some gentlemen don't seem as though they do. I don't want to insult no one; but as chairman here at this convivial meeting, I asks that gentleman who says he is a solicitor whether he means to pay his dinner bill according to the rules of the room, or whether he don't?'

'I've paid for what I've had already,' said Dockwrath, 'and I don't mean to pay for what I've not had.'

'James,' exclaimed Moulder—and all the chairman was in his voice as he spoke,—'my compliments to Mr. Crump, and I will request his attendance for five minutes:' and then James left the

room, and there was silence for a while, during which the bottles made their round of the table.

‘Hadn’t we better send back the pint of wine which Mr. Dockwrath hasn’t used?’ suggested Kantwise.

‘I’m d—— if we do!’ replied Moulder, with much energy; and the general silence was not again broken till Mr. Crump made his appearance; but the chairman whispered a private word or two to his friend Snengkeld. ‘I never sent back ordered liquor to the bar yet, unless it was bad; and I’m not going to begin now.’

And then Mr. Crump came in. Mr. Crump was a very clean-looking person, without any beard; and dressed from head to foot in black. He was about fifty, with grizzly gray hair, which stood upright on his head, and his face at the present moment wore on it an innkeeper’s smile. But it could also assume an innkeeper’s frown, and on occasions did so—when bills were disputed, or unreasonable strangers thought that they knew the distance in posting miles round the neighbourhood of Leeds better than did he, Mr. Crump, who had lived at the Bull Inn all his life. But Mr. Crump rarely frowned on commercial gentleman, from whom was derived the main stay of his business and the main prop of his house.

‘Mr. Crump,’ began Moulder, ‘here has occurred a very unpleasant transaction.’

‘I know all about it, gentlemen,’ said Mr. Crump. ‘The waiter has acquainted me, and I can assure you, gentlemen, that I am extremely sorry that anything should have arisen to disturb the harmony of your dinner-table.’

‘We must now call upon you, Mr. Crump,’ began Mr. Moulder, who was about to demand that Dockwrath should be turned bodily out of the room.

‘If you’ll allow me one moment, Mr. Moulder,’ continued Mr. Crump, ‘and I’ll tell you what is my suggestion. The gentleman here, who I understand is a lawyer, does not wish to comply with the rules of the commercial room.’

‘I certainly don’t wish or intend to pay for drink that I didn’t order and haven’t had,’ said Dockwrath.

‘Exactly,’ said Mr. Crump. ‘And therefore, gentlemen, to get out of the difficulty, we’ll presume, if you please, that the bill is paid.’

‘The lawyer, as you call him, will have to leave the room,’ said Moulder.

‘Perhaps he will not object to step over to the coffee-room on the other side,’ suggested the landlord.

‘I can’t think of leaving my seat here under such circumstances,’ said Dockwrath.

‘You can’t,’ said Moulder. ‘Then you must be made, as I take it.’

‘Let me see the man that will make me,’ said Dockwrath.

Mr. Crump looked very apologetic and not very comfortable. ‘There is a difficulty, gentlemen; there is a difficulty, indeed,’ he said. ‘The fact is, the gentleman should not have been showed into the room at all;’ and he looked very angrily at his own servant, James.

‘He said he was ’mercial,’ said James. ‘So he did. Now he says as how he’s a lawyer. What’s a poor man to do?’

‘I’m a commercial lawyer,’ said Dockwrath.

‘He must leave the room, or I shall leave the house,’ said Moulder.

‘Gentlemen, gentlemen!’ said Crump. ‘This kind of thing does not happen often, and on this occasion I must try your kind patience. If Mr. Moulder would allow me to suggest that the commercial gentlemen should take their wine in the large drawing-room up stairs this evening, Mrs. C. will do her best to make it comfortable for them in five minutes. There of course they can be private.’

There was something in the idea of leaving Mr. Dockwrath alone in his glory which appeased the spirit of the great Moulder. He had known Crump, moreover, for many years, and was aware that it would be a dangerous, and probably an expensive proceeding to thrust out the attorney by violence. ‘If the other gentlemen are agreeable, I am,’ said he. The other gentlemen were agreeable, and, with the exception of Kantwise, they all rose from their chairs.

‘I must say I think you ought to leave the room as you don’t choose to abide by the rules,’ said Johnson, addressing himself to Dockwrath.

‘That’s your opinion,’ said Dockwrath.

‘Yes, it is,’ said Johnson. ‘That’s my opinion.’

‘My own happens to be different,’ said Dockwrath; and so he kept his chair.

‘There, Mr. Crump,’ said Moulder, taking half a crown from his pocket, and throwing it on the table. ‘I shan’t see you at a loss.’

‘Thank you, sir,’ said Mr. Crump; and he very humbly took up the money.

‘I keep a little account for charity at home,’ said Moulder.

‘It don’t run very high, do it?’ asked Snengkeld, jocosely.

‘Not out of the way, it don’t. But now I shall have the pleasure of writing down in it that I paid half a crown for a lawyer who couldn’t afford to settle his own dinner bill. Sir, we have the pleasure of wishing you a good night.’

‘I hope you’ll find the large drawing-room up stairs quite comfortable,’ said Dockwrath.

And then they all marched out of the room, each with his own glass. Mr. Moulder leading the way with stately step. It was

pleasant to see them as they all followed their leader across the open passage of the gateway, in by the bar, and so up the chief staircase. Mr. Moulder walked slowly, bearing the bottle of port and his own glass, and Mr. Snengkeld and Mr. Gape followed in line, bearing also their own glasses, and maintaining the dignity of their profession under circumstances of some difficulty.

‘Gentlemen, I really am sorry for this little accident,’ said Mr. Crump, as they were passing the bar; ‘but a lawyer, you know—’

‘And such a lawyer, eh, Crump?’ said Moulder.

‘It might be five-and-twenty pound to me to lay a hand on him!’ said the landlord.

When the time came for Mr. Kantwise to move, he considered the matter well. The chances, however, as he calculated them, were against any profitable business being done with the attorney, so he also left the room. ‘Good night, sir,’ he said as he went. ‘I wish you a very good night.’

‘Take care of yourself,’ said Dockwrath; and then the attorney spent the rest of the evening alone.

CHAPTER X.

MR., MRS., AND MISS FURNIVAL.

I WILL now ask my readers to come with me up to London, in order that I may introduce them to the family of the Furnivals. We shall see much of the Furnivals before we reach the end of our present undertaking, and it will be well that we should commence our acquaintance with them as early as may be done.

Mr. Furnival was a lawyer—I mean a barrister—belonging to Lincoln’s Inn, and living at the time at which our story is supposed to commence in Harley Street. But he had not been long a resident in Harley Street, having left the less fashionable neighbourhood of Russell Square only two or three years before that period. On his marriage he had located himself in a small house in Keppel Street, and had there remained till professional success, long waited for, enabled him to move further west, and indulge himself with the comforts of larger rooms and more servants. At the time of which I am now speaking Mr. Furnival was known, and well known, as a successful man; but he had struggled long and hard before that success had come to him, and during the earliest years of his married life had found the work of keeping the wolf from his door to be almost more than enough for his energies.

Mr. Furnival practised at the common law bar, and early in life had attached himself to the home circuit. I cannot say why he obtained no great success till he was nearer fifty than forty years of age. At that time I fancy that barristers did not come to their prime till a period of life at which other men are supposed to be in their decadence. Nevertheless, he had married on nothing, and had kept the wolf from the door. To do this he had been constant at his work in season and out of season, during the long hours of day and the long hours of night. Throughout his term times he had toiled in court, and during the vacations he had toiled out of court. He had reported volumes of cases, having been himself his own short-hand writer,—as it is well known to most young lawyers, who as a rule always fill an upper shelf in their law libraries with Furnival and Staples' seventeen volumes in calf. He had worked for the booksellers, and for the newspapers, and for the attorneys,—always working, however, with reference to the law; and though he had worked for years with the lowest pay, no man had heard him complain. That no woman had heard him do so, I will not say; as it is more than probable that into the sympathizing ears of Mrs. Furnival he did pour forth complaints as to the small wages which the legal world meted out to him in return for his labours. He was a constant, hard, patient man, and at last there came to him the full reward of all his industry. What was the special case by which Mr. Furnival obtained his great success no man could say. In all probability there was no special case. Gradually it began to be understood that he was a safe man, understanding his trade, true to his clients, and very damaging as an opponent. Legal gentlemen are, I believe, quite as often bought off as bought up. Sir Richard and Mr. Furnival could not both be required on the same side, seeing what a tower of strength each was in himself; but then Sir Richard would be absolutely neutralized if Mr. Furnival were employed on the other side. This is a system well understood by attorneys, and has been found to be extremely lucrative by gentlemen leading at the bar.

Mr. Furnival was now fifty-five years of age, and was beginning to show in his face some traces of his hard work. Not that he was becoming old, or weak, or worn; but his eye had lost its fire—except the fire peculiar to his profession; and there were wrinkles in his forehead and cheeks; and his upper lip, except when he was speaking, hung heavily over the lower; and the loose skin below his eye was forming itself into saucers; and his hair had become grizzled; and on his shoulders, except when in court, there was a slight stoop. As seen in his wig and gown he was a man of commanding presence,—and for ten men in London who knew him in this garb, hardly one knew him without it. He was nearly six feet high, and stood forth prominently, with square,

broad shoulders and a large body. His head also was large; his forehead was high, and marked strongly by signs of intellect; his nose was long and straight, his eyes were very gray, and capable to an extraordinary degree both of direct severity and of concealed sarcasm. Witnesses have been heard to say that they could endure all that Mr. Furnival could say to them, and continue in some sort to answer all his questions, if only he would refrain from looking at them. But he would never refrain; and therefore it was now well understood how great a thing it was to secure the services of Mr. Furnival. 'Sir,' an attorney would say to an unfortunate client doubtful as to the expenditure, 'your witnesses will not be able to stand in the box if we allow Mr. Furnival to be engaged on the other side.' I am inclined to think that Mr. Furnival owed to this power of his eyes his almost unequalled perfection in that peculiar branch of his profession. His voice was powerful, and not unpleasant when used within the precincts of a court, though it grated somewhat harshly on the ears in the smaller compass of a private room. His flow of words was free and good, and seemed to come from him without the slightest effort. Such at least was always the case with him when standing wigged and gowned before a judge. Latterly, however, he had tried his eloquence on another arena, and not altogether with equal success. He was now in Parliament, sitting as member for the Essex Marshes, and he had not as yet carried either the country or the House with him, although he had been frequently on his legs. Some men said that with a little practice he would yet become very serviceable as an honourable and learned member; but others expressed a fear that he had come too late in life to these new duties.

I have spoken of Mr. Furnival's great success in that branch of his profession which required from him the examination of evidence, but I would not have it thought that he was great only in this, or even mainly in this. There are gentlemen at the bar, among whom I may perhaps notice my old friend Mr. Chaffanbrass as the most conspicuous, who have confined their talents to the browbeating of witnesses,—greatly to their own profit, and no doubt to the advantage of society. But I would have it understood that Mr. Furnival was by no means one of these. He had been no Old Bailey lawyer, devoting himself to the manumission of murderers, or the security of the swindling world in general. He had been employed on abstruse points of law, had been great in will cases, very learned as to the rights of railways, peculiarly apt in enforcing the dowries of married women, and successful above all things in separating husbands and wives whose lives had not been passed in accordance with the recognized rules of Hymen. Indeed there is no branch of the Common Law in which he was not regarded as great and powerful, though perhaps his proficiency in damaging the

general characters of his opponents has been recognized as his especial forte. Under these circumstances I should grieve to have him confounded with such men as Mr. Chaffanbrass, who is hardly known by the profession beyond the precincts of his own peculiar court in the City. Mr. Furnival's reputation has spread itself wherever stuff gowns and horsehair wigs are held in estimation.

Mr. Furnival when clothed in his forensic habiliments certainly possessed a solemn and severe dignity which had its weight even with the judges. Those who scrutinized his appearance critically might have said that it was in some respects pretentious; but the ordinary jurymen of this country are not critical scrutinizers of appearance, and by them he was never held in light estimation. When in his addresses to them, appealing to their intelligence, education, and enlightened justice, he would declare that the property of his clients was perfectly safe in their hands, he looked to be such an advocate as a litigant would fain possess when dreading the soundness of his own cause. Any cause was sound to him when once he had been feed for its support, and he carried in his countenance his assurance of this soundness,—and the assurance of unsoundness in the cause of his opponent. Even he did not always win; but on the occasion of his losing, those of the uninitiated who had heard the pleadings would express their astonishment that he should not have been successful.

When he was divested of his wig his appearance was not so perfect. There was then a hard, long straightness about his head and face, giving to his countenance the form of a parallelogram, to which there belonged a certain meanness of expression. He wanted the roundness of forehead, the short lines, and the graceful curves of face which are necessary to unadorned manly comeliness. His whiskers were small, grizzled, and ill grown, and required the ample relief of his wig. In no guise did he look other than a clever man; but in his dress as a simple citizen he would perhaps be taken as a clever man in whose tenderness of heart and cordiality of feeling one would not at first sight place implicit trust.

As a poor man Mr. Furnival had done his duty well by his wife and family,—for as a poor man he had been blessed with four children. Three of these had died as they were becoming men and women, and now, as a rich man, he was left with one daughter, an only child. As a poor man Mr. Furnival had been an excellent husband, going forth in the morning to his work, struggling through the day, and then returning to his meagre dinner and his long evenings of unremitting drudgery. The bodily strength which had supported him through his work in those days must have been immense, for he had allowed himself no holidays. And then success and money had come,—and Mrs. Furnival sometimes found

herself not quite so happy as she had been when watching beside him in the days of their poverty.

The equal mind,—as mortal Delius was bidden to remember, and as Mr. Furnival might also have remembered had time been allowed him to cultivate the classics,—the equal mind should be as sedulously maintained when things run well, as well as when they run hardly; and perhaps the maintenance of such equal mind is more difficult in the former than in the latter stage of life. Be that as it may, Mr. Furnival could now be very cross on certain domestic occasions, and could also be very unjust. And there was worse than this,—much worse behind. He, who in the heyday of his youth would spend night after night poring over his books, copying out reports, and never asking to see a female habiliment brighter or more attractive than his wife's Sunday gown, he, at the age of fifty-five, was now running after strange goddesses! The member for the Essex Marshes, in these his latter days, was obtaining for himself among other successes the character of a Lothario; and Mrs. Furnival, sitting at home in her genteel drawing-room near Cavendish Square, would remember with regret the small dingy parlour in Keppel Street.

Mrs. Furnival in discussing her grievances would attribute them mainly to port wine. In his early days Mr. Furnival had been essentially an abstemious man. Young men who work fifteen hours a day must be so. But now he had a strong opinion about certain Portuguese vintages, was convinced that there was no port wine in London equal to the contents of his own bin, saving always a certain green cork appertaining to his own club, which was to be extracted at the rate of thirty shillings a cork. And Mrs. Furnival attributed to these latter studies not only a certain purple hue which was suffusing his nose and cheeks, but also that unevenness of character and those supposed domestic improprieties to which allusion has been made. It may, however, be as well to explain that Mrs. Ball, the old family cook and housekeeper, who had ascended with the Furnivals in the world, opined that made-dishes did the mischief. He dined out too often, and was a deal too particular about his dinner when he dined at home. If Providence would see fit to visit him with a sharp attack of the gout, it would—so thought Mrs. Ball—be better for all parties.

Whether or no it may have been that Mrs. Furnival at fifty-five—for she and her lord were of the same age—was not herself as attractive in her husband's eyes as she had been at thirty, I will not pretend to say. There can have been no just reason for any such change in feeling, seeing that the two had grown old together. She, poor woman, would still have been quite content with the attentions of Mr. Furnival, though his hair was grizzled and his nose was blue; nor did she ever think of attracting to herself the admira-

tion of any swain whose general comeliness might be more free from all taint of age. Why then should he wander afield—at the age of fifty-five? That he did wander afield, poor Mrs. Furnival felt in her agony convinced; and among those ladies whom on this account she most thoroughly detested was our friend Lady Mason of Orley Farm. Lady Mason and the lawyer had first become acquainted in the days of the trial, now long gone by, on which occasion Mr. Furnival had been employed as the junior counsel; and that acquaintance had ripened into friendship, and now flourished in full vigour,—to Mrs. Furnival's great sorrow and disturbance.

Mrs. Furnival herself was a stout, solid woman, sensible on most points, but better adapted, perhaps, to the life in Keppel Street than that to which she had now been promoted. As Kitty Blacker she had possessed feminine charms which would have been famous had they been better known. Mr. Furnival had fetched her from farther East—from the region of Great Ormond-street and the neighbourhood of Southampton Buildings. Her cherry cheeks, and her round eye, and her full bust, and her fresh lip, had conquered the hard-tasked lawyer; and so they had gone forth to fight the world together. Her eye was still round, and her cheek red, and her bust full,—there had certainly been no falling off there; nor will I say that her lip had lost all its freshness. But the bloom of her charms had passed away, and she was now a solid, stout, motherly woman, not bright in converse, but by no means deficient in mother-wit, recognizing well the duties which she owed to others, but recognizing equally well those which others owed to her. All the charms of her youth—had they not been given to him, and also all her solicitude, all her anxious fighting with the hard world? When they had been poor together, had she not patched and turned and twisted, sitting silently by his side into the long nights, because she would not ask him for the price of a new dress? And yet now, now that they were rich—? Mrs. Furnival, when she put such questions within her own mind, could hardly answer this latter one with patience. Others might be afraid of the great Mr. Furnival in his wig and gown; others might be struck dumb by his power of eye and mouth; but she, she, the wife of his bosom, she could catch him without his armour. She would so catch him and let him know what she thought of all her wrongs. So she said to herself many a day, and yet the great deed, in all its explosiveness, had never yet been done. Small attacks of words there had been many, but hitherto the courage to speak out her griefs openly had been wanting to her.

I can now allow myself but a small space to say a few words of Sophia Furnival, and yet in that small space must be confined all the direct description which can be given of one of the principal personages of this story. At nineteen Miss Furnival was in all

respects a young woman. She was forward in acquirements, in manner, in general intelligence, and in powers of conversation. She was a handsome, tall girl, with expressive gray eyes and dark-brown hair. Her mouth, and hair, and a certain motion of her neck and turn of her head, had come to her from her mother, but her eyes were those of her father: they were less sharp perhaps, less eager after their prey; but they were bright as his had been bright, and sometimes had in them more of absolute command than he was ever able to throw into his own.

Their golden days had come on them at a period of her life which enabled her to make a better use of them than her mother could do. She never felt herself to be struck dumb by rank or fashion, nor did she in the drawing-rooms of the great ever show signs of an Eastern origin. She could adapt herself without an effort to the manners of Cavendish Square;—ay, and if need were, to the ways of more glorious squares even than that. Therefore was her father never ashamed to be seen with her on his arm in the houses of his new friends, though on such occasions he was willing enough to go out without disturbing the repose of his wife. No mother could have loved her children with a warmer affection than that which had warmed the heart of poor Mrs. Furnival; but under such circumstances as these was it singular that she should occasionally become jealous of her own daughter?

Sophia Furnival was, as I have said, a clever, attractive girl, handsome, well-read, able to hold her own with the old as well as with the young, capable of hiding her vanity if she had any, mild and gentle to girls less gifted, animated in conversation, and yet possessing an eye that could fall softly to the ground, as a woman's eye always should fall upon occasions.

Nevertheless she was not altogether charming. 'I don't feel quite sure that she is real,' Mrs. Orme had said of her, when on a certain occasion Miss Furnival had spent a day and a night at The Cleeve.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. FURNIVAL AT HOME.

LUCIUS MASON on his road to Liverpool had passed through London, and had found a moment to call in Harley Street. Since his return from Germany he had met Miss Furnival both at home at his mother's house—or rather his own—and at the Cleeve. Miss Furnival had been in the neighbourhood, and had spent two days with the great people at the Cleeve, and one day with the little people at Orley Farm. Lucius Mason had found that she was a sensible girl, capable of discussing great subjects with him; and had possibly found some other charms in her. Therefore he had called in Harley Street.

On that occasion he could only call as he passed through London without delay; but he received such encouragement as induced him to spend a night in town on his return, in order that he might accept an invitation to drink tea with the Furnivals. 'We shall be very happy to see you,' Mrs. Furnival had said, backing the proposition which had come from her daughter without any very great fervour; 'but I fear Mr. Furnival will not be at home. Mr. Furnival very seldom is at home now.' Young Mason did not much care for fervour on the part of Sophia's mother, and therefore had accepted the invitation, though he was obliged by so doing to curtail by some hours his sojourn among the guano stores of Liverpool.

It was the time of year at which few people are at home in London, being the middle of October; but Mrs. Furnival was a lady of whom at such periods it was not very easy to dispose. She could have made herself as happy as a queen even at Margate, if it could have suited Furnival and Sophia to be happy at Margate with her. But this did not suit Furnival or Sophia. As regards money, any or almost all other autumnal resorts were open to her, but she could be contented at none of them because Mr. Furnival always pleaded that business—law business or political business—took him elsewhere. Now Mrs. Furnival was a woman who did not like to be deserted, and who could not, in the absence of those social joys which Providence had vouchsafed to her as her own, make herself happy with the society of other women such as herself. Furnival was her husband, and

she wanted him to carve for her, to sit opposite to her at the breakfast table, to tell her the news of the day, and to walk to church with her on Sundays. They had been made one flesh and one bone, for better and worse, thirty years since; and now in her latter days she could not put up with disseveration and dislocation.

She had gone down to Brighton in August, soon after the House broke up, and there found that very handsome apartments had been taken for her—rooms that would have made glad the heart of many a lawyer's wife. She had, too, the command of a fly, done up to look like a private brougham, a servant in livery, the run of the public assembly-rooms, a sitting in the centre of the most fashionable church in Brighton—all that the heart of woman could desire. All but the one thing was there; but, that one thing being absent, she came moodily back to town at the end of September. She would have exchanged them all with a happy heart for very moderate accommodation at Margate, could she have seen Mr. Furnival's blue nose on the other side of the table every morning and evening as she sat over her shrimps and tea.

Men who had risen in the world as Mr. Furnival had done do find it sometimes difficult to dispose of their wives. It is not that the ladies are in themselves more unfit for rising than their lords, or that if occasion demanded they would not as readily adapt themselves to new spheres. But they do not rise, and occasion does not demand it. A man elevates his wife to his own rank, and when Mr. Brown, on becoming solicitor-general, becomes Sir Jacob, Mrs. Brown also becomes my lady. But the whole set among whom Brown must be more or less thrown do not want her ladyship. On Brown's promotion she did not become part of the bargain. Brown must henceforth have two existences—a public and a private existence; and it will be well for Lady Brown, and well also for Sir Jacob, if the latter be not allowed to dwindle down to a minimum.

If Lady B. can raise herself also, if she can make her own occasion—if she be handsome and can flirt, if she be impudent and can force her way, if she have a daring mind and can commit great expenditure, if she be clever and can make poetry, if she can in any way create a separate glory for herself, then, indeed, Sir Jacob with his blue nose may follow his own path, and all will be well. Sir Jacob's blue nose seated opposite to her will not be her summum bonum.

But worthy Mrs. Furnival—and she was worthy—had created for herself no such separate glory, nor did she dream of creating it; and therefore she had, as it were, no footing left to her. On this occasion she had gone to Brighton, and had returned from it sulky and wretched, bringing her daughter back to London at the period of London's greatest desolation. Sophia had returned uncomplaining, remembering that good things were in store for her. She had been

asked to spend her Christmas with the Staveleys at Noningsby—the family of Judge Staveley, who lives near Alston, at a very pretty country place so called. Mr. Furnival had been for many years acquainted with Judge Staveley—had known the judge when he was a leading counsel; and now that Mr. Furnival was a rising man, and now that he had a pretty daughter, it was natural that the young Staveleys and Sophia Furnival should know each other. But poor Mrs. Furnival was too ponderous for this mounting late in life, and she had not been asked to Noningsby. She was much too good a mother to repine at her daughter's promised gaiety. Sophia was welcome to go; but by all the laws of God and man it would behove her lord and husband to eat his mincepie at home.

‘Mr. Furnival was to be back in town this evening,’ the lady said, as though apologizing to young Mason for her husband's absence, when he entered the drawing-room, ‘but he has not come, and I dare say will not come now.’

Mason did not care a straw for Mr. Furnival. ‘Oh! won't he?’ said he. ‘I suppose business keeps him.’

‘Papa is very busy about politics just at present,’ said Sophia, wishing to make matters smooth in her mother's mind. ‘He was obliged to be at Romford in the beginning of the week, and then he went down to Birmingham. There is some congress going on there, is there not?’

‘All that must take a great deal of time,’ said Lucius.

‘Yes; and it is a terrible bore,’ said Sophia. ‘I know papa finds it so.’

‘Your papa likes it, I believe,’ said Mrs. Furnival, who would not hide even her grievances under a bushel.

‘I don't think he likes being so much from home, mamma. Of course he likes excitement, and success. All men do. Do they not, Mr. Mason?’

‘They all ought to do so, and women also.’

‘Ah! but women have no sphere, Mr. Mason.’

‘They have minds equal to those of men,’ said Lucius, gallantly, ‘and ought to be able to make for themselves careers as brilliant.’

‘Women ought not to have any spheres,’ said Mrs. Furnival.

‘I don't know that I quite agree with you there, mamma.’

‘The world is becoming a great deal too fond of what you call excitement and success. Of course it is a good thing for a man to make money by his profession, and a very hard thing when he can't do it,’ added Mrs. Furnival, thinking of the olden days. ‘But if success in life means rampaging about, and never knowing what it is to sit quiet over his own fireside, I for one would as soon manage to do without it.’

‘But, mamma, I don't see why success should always be rampageous.’

'Literary women who have achieved a name bear their honours quietly,' said Lucius.

'I don't know,' said Mrs. Furnival. 'I am told that some of them are as fond of gadding as the men. As regards the old maids, I don't care so much about it; people who are not married may do what they like with themselves, and nobody has anything to say to them. But it is very different for married people. They have no business to be enticed away from their homes by any success.'

'Mamma is all for a Darby and Joan life,' said Sophia, laughing.

'No I am not, my dear; and you should not say so. I don't advocate anything that is absurd. But I do say that life should be lived at home. That is the best part of it. What is the meaning of home if it isn't that?'

Poor Mrs. Furnival! she had no idea that she was complaining to a stranger of her husband. Had any one told her so she would have declared that she was discussing general world-wide topics; but Lucius Mason, young as he was, knew that the marital shoe was pinching the lady's domestic corn, and he made haste to change the subject.

'You know my mother, Mrs. Furnival?'

Mrs. Furnival said that she had the honour of acquaintance with Lady Mason; but on this occasion also she exhibited but little fervour.

'I shall meet her up in town to-morrow,' said Lucius. 'She is coming up for some shopping.'

'Oh! indeed,' said Mrs. Furnival.

'And then we go down home together. I am to meet her at the chymist's at the top of Chancery Lane.'

Now this was a very unnecessary communication on the part of young Mason, and also an unfortunate one. 'Oh! indeed,' said Mrs. Furnival again, throwing her head a little back. Poor woman! she could not conceal what was in her mind, and her daughter knew all about it immediately. The truth was this. Mr. Furnival had been for some days on the move, at Birmingham and elsewhere, and had now sent up sudden notice that he should probably be at home that very night. He should probably be at home that night, but in such case would be compelled to return to his friends at Birmingham on the following afternoon. Now if it were an ascertained fact that he was coming to London merely with the view of meeting Lady Mason, the wife of his bosom would not think it necessary to provide for him the warmest possible welcome. This of course was not an ascertained fact; but was there not terrible grounds of suspicion? Mr. Furnival's law chambers were in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, close to Chancery Lane, and Lady Mason had made her appointment with her son within five minutes' walk of that locality. And was it not in itself a strange coincidence that

Lady Mason, who came to town so seldom, should now do so on the very day of Mr. Furnival's sudden return? She felt sure that they were to meet on the morrow, but yet she could not declare even to herself that it was an ascertained fact.

'Oh! indeed,' she said; and Sophia understood all about it, though Lucius did not.

Then Mrs. Furnival sank into silence; and we need not follow, word for word, the conversation between the young lady and the young gentleman. Mr. Mason thought that Miss Furnival was a very nice girl, and was not at all ill pleased to have an opportunity of passing an evening in her company; and Miss Furnival thought—. What she thought, or what young ladies may think generally about young gentlemen, is not to be spoken openly; but it seemed as though she also were employed to her own satisfaction, while her mother sat moody in her own arm-chair. In the course of the evening the footman in livery brought in tea, handing it round on a big silver salver, which also added to Mrs. Furnival's unhappiness. She would have liked to sit behind her tea-tray as she used to do in the good old hard-working days, with a small pile of buttered toast on the slop-bowl, kept warm by hot water below it. In those dear old hard-working days, buttered toast had been a much-loved delicacy with Furnival; and she, kind woman, had never begrudged her eyes, as she sat making it for him over the parlour fire. Nor would she have begrudged them now, neither her eyes nor the work of her hands, nor all the thoughts of her heart, if he would have consented to accept of her handiwork; but in these days Mr. Furnival had learned a relish for other delicacies.

She also had liked buttered toast, always, however, taking the pieces with the upper crust, in order that the more luscious morsels might be left for him; and she had liked to prepare her own tea leisurely, putting in slowly the sugar and cream—skimmed milk it had used to be, dropped for herself with a sparing hand, in order that his large breakfast-cup might be whitened to his liking; but though the milk had been skimmed and scanty, and though the tea itself had been put in with a sparing hand, she had then been mistress of the occasion. She had had her own way, and in stinting herself had found her own reward. But now—the tea had no flavour now that it was made in the kitchen and brought to her, cold and rapid, by a man in livery whom she half feared to keep waiting while she ministered to her own wants.

And so she sat moody in her arm-chair, cross and sulky, as her daughter thought. But yet there was a vein of poetry in her heart as she sat there, little like a sibyl as she looked. Dear old days, in which her cares and solicitude were valued; in which she could do something for the joint benefit of the firm into which she had been taken as a partner! How happy she had been in her struggles, how

piteously had her heart yearned towards him when she thought that he was struggling too fiercely, how brave and constant he had been; and how she had loved him as he sat steady as a rock at his grinding work! Now had come the great success of which they had both dreamed together, of which they had talked as arm in arm they were taking the exercise that was so needful to him, walking quickly round Russell Square, quickly round Bloomsbury Square and Bedford Square, and so back to the grinding work in Keppel Street. It had come now—all of which they had dreamed, and more than all they had dared to hope. But of what good was it? Was he happy? No; he was fretful, bilious, and worn with toil which was hard to him because he ate and drank too much; he was ill at ease in public, only half understanding the political life which he was obliged to assume in his new ambition; and he was sick in his conscience—she was sure that must be so: he could not thus neglect her, his loving, constant wife, without some pang of remorse. And was she happy? She might have revelled in silks and satins, if silks and satins would have done her old heart good. But they would do her no good. How she had joyed in a new dress, when it had been so hard to come by, so slow in coming, and when he would go with her to the choosing of it! But her gowns now were hardly of more interest to her than the joints of meat which the butcher brought to the door with the utmost regularity. It behoved the butcher to send good beef and the milliner to send good silk, and there was an end of it.

Not but what she could have been ecstatic about a full skirt on a smart body if he would have cared to look at it. In truth she was still soft and young enough within, though stout, and solid, and somewhat aged without. Though she looked cross and surly that night, there was soft poetry within her heart. If Providence, who had bountifully given, would now by chance mercifully take away those gifts, would she not then forgive everything and toil for him again with the same happiness as before? Ah! yes; she could forgive everything, anything, if he would only return and be contented to sit opposite to her once again. ‘O mortal Delius, dearest lord and husband!’ she exclaimed within her own breast, in language somewhat differing from that of the Roman poet, ‘why hast thou not remembered to maintain a mind equal in prosperity as it was always equal and well poised in adversity? Oh! my Delius, since prosperity has been too much for thee, may the Lord bless thee once more with the adversity which thou canst bear—which thou canst bear, and I with thee!’ Thus did she sing sadly within her own bosom—sadly, but with true poetic cadence; while Sophia and Lucius Mason, sitting by, when for a moment they turned their eyes upon her, gave her credit only for the cross solemnity supposed to be incidental to obese and declining years.

And then there came a ring at the bell and a knock at the door, and a rush along the nether passages, and the lady knew that he of whom she had been thinking had arrived. In olden days she had ever met him in the narrow passage, and, indifferent to the maid, she had hung about his neck and kissed him in the hall. But now she did not stir from her chair. She could forgive him all and run again at the sound of his footstep, but she must first know that such forgiveness and such running would be welcome.

'That's papa,' said Sophia.

'Don't forget that I have not met him since I have been home from Germany,' said Lucius. 'You must introduce me.'

In a minute or two Mr. Furnival opened the door and walked into the room. Men when they arrive from their travels now-a-days have no strippings of greatcoats, no deposits to make of thick shawls and double gloves, no absolutely necessary changes of raiment. Such had been the case when he had used to come back cold and weary from the circuits; but now he had left Birmingham since dinner by the late express, had enjoyed his nap in the train for two hours or so, and walked into his own drawing-room as he might have done had he dined in his own dining-room.

'How are you, Kitty?' he said to his wife, handing to her the forefinger of his right hand by way of greeting. 'Well, Sophy, my love;' and he kissed his daughter. 'Oh! Lucius Mason. I am very glad to see you. I can't say I should have remembered you unless I had been told. You are very welcome in Harley Street, and I hope you will often be here.'

'It's not very often he'd find you at home, Mr. Furnival,' said the aggrieved wife.

'Not so often as I could wish just at present; but things will be more settled, I hope, before very long. How's your mother, Lucius?'

'She's pretty well, thank you, sir. I've to meet her in town to-morrow, and go down home with her.'

There was then silence in the room for a few seconds, during which Mrs. Furnival looked very sharply at her husband. 'Oh! she's to be in town, is she?' said Mr. Furnival, after a moment's consideration. He was angry with Lady Mason at the moment for having put him into this position. Why had she told her son that she was to be up in London, thus producing conversation and tittle-tattle which made deceit on his part absolutely necessary? Lady Mason's business in London was of a nature which would not bear much open talking. She herself, in her earnest letter summoning Mr. Furnival up from Birmingham, had besought him that her visit to his chambers might not be made matter of discussion. New troubles might be coming on her, but also they might not; and she was very anxious that no one should know that she was seeking a

lawyer's advice on the matter. To all this Mr. Furnival had given in his adhesion; and yet she had put it into her son's power to come to his drawing-room and chatter there of her whereabouts. For a moment or two he doubted; but at the expiration of those moments he saw that the deceit was necessary. 'She's to be in town, is she?' said he. The reader will of course observe that this deceit was practised, not as between husband and wife with reference to an assignation with a lady, but between the lawyer and the outer world with reference to a private meeting with a client. But then it is sometimes so difficult to make wives look at such matters in the right light.

'She's coming up for some shopping,' said Lucius.

'Oh! indeed,' said Mrs. Furnival. She would not have spoken if she could have helped it, but she could not help it; and then there was silence in the room for a minute or two, which Lucius vainly endeavoured to break by a few indifferent observations to Miss Furnival. The words, however, which he uttered would not take the guise of indifferent observations, but fell flatly on their ears, and at the same time solemnly, as though spoken with the sole purpose of creating sound.

'I hope you have been enjoying yourself at Birmingham,' said Mrs. Furnival.

'Enjoyed myself! I did not exactly go there for enjoyment.'

'Or at Romford, where you were before?'

'Women seem to think that men have no purpose but amusement when they go about their daily work,' said Mr. Furnival; and then he threw himself back in his arm-chair, and took up the last Quarterly.

Lucius Mason soon perceived that all the harmony of the evening had in some way been marred by the return of the master of the house, and that he might be in the way if he remained; he therefore took his leave.

'I shall want breakfast punctually at half-past eight to-morrow morning,' said Mr. Furnival, as soon as the stranger had withdrawn. 'I must be in chambers before ten;' and then he took his candle and withdrew to his own room.

Sophia rang the bell and gave the servant the order; but Mrs. Furnival took no trouble in the matter whatever. In the olden days she would have bustled down before she went to bed, and have seen herself that everything was ready, so that the master of the house might not be kept waiting. But all this was nothing to her now.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. FURNIVAL'S CHAMBERS.

MR. FURNIVAL'S chambers were on the first floor in a very dingy edifice in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn. This square was always dingy, even when it was comparatively open and served as the approach from Chancery Lane to the Lord Chancellor's Court; but now it has been built up with new shops for the Vice-Chancellor, and to my eyes it seems more dingy than ever.

He there occupied three rooms, all of them sufficiently spacious for the purposes required, but which were made oppressive by their general dinginess and by a smell of old leather which pervaded them. In one of them sat at his desk Mr. Crabwitz, a gentleman who had now been with Mr. Furnival for the last fifteen years, and who considered that no inconsiderable portion of the barrister's success had been attributable to his own energy and genius. Mr. Crabwitz was a genteel-looking man, somewhat over forty years of age, very careful as to his gloves, hat, and umbrella, and not a little particular as to his associates. As he was unmarried, fond of ladies' society, and presumed to be a warm man in money matters, he had his social successes, and looked down from a considerable altitude on some men who from their professional rank might have been considered as his superiors. He had a small bachelor's box down at Barnes, and not unfrequently went abroad in the vacations. The door opening into the room of Mr. Crabwitz was in the corner fronting you on the left-hand side as you entered the chambers. Immediately on your left was a large waiting-room, in which an additional clerk usually sat at an ordinary table. He was not an authorized part of the establishment, being kept only from week to week; but nevertheless, for the last two or three years he had been always there, and Mr. Crabwitz intended that he should remain, for he acted as fag to Mr. Crabwitz. This waiting-room was very dingy, much more so than the clerk's room, and boasted of no furniture but eight old leathern chairs and two old tables. It was surrounded by shelves which were laden with books and dust, which by no chance were ever disturbed. But to my ideas the most dingy of the three rooms was that large one in which the great man himself sat; the door of which directly fronted you as you entered.

The furniture was probably better than that in the other chambers, and the place had certainly the appearance of warmth and life which comes from frequent use; but nevertheless, of all the rooms in which I ever sat I think it was the most gloomy. There were heavy curtains to the windows, which had once been ruby but were now brown; and the ceiling was brown, and the thick carpet was brown, and the books which covered every portion of the wall were brown, and the painted wood-work of the doors and windows was of a dark brown. Here, on the morning with which we have now to deal, sat Mr. Furnival over his papers from ten to twelve, at which latter hour Lady Mason was to come to him. The holidays of Mr. Crabwitz had this year been cut short in consequence of his patron's attendance at the great congress which was now sitting, and although all London was a desert, as he had piteously complained to a lady of his acquaintance whom he had left at Boulogne, he was there in the midst of the desert, and on this morning was sitting in attendance at his usual desk.

Why Mr. Furnival should have breakfasted by himself at half-past eight in order that he might be at his chambers at ten, seeing that the engagement for which he had come to town was timed for twelve, I will not pretend to say. He did not ask his wife to join him, and consequently she did not come down till her usual time. Mr. Furnival breakfasted by himself, and at ten o'clock he was in his chambers. Though alone for two hours he was not idle, and exactly at twelve Mr. Crabwitz opened his door and announced Lady Mason.

When we last parted with her after her interview with Sir Peregrine Orme, she had resolved not to communicate with her friend the lawyer,—at any rate not to do so immediately. Thinking on that resolve she had tried to sleep that night; but her mind was altogether disturbed, and she could get no rest. What, if after twenty years of tranquillity all her troubles must now be recommenced? What if the battle were again to be fought,—with such termination as the chances of war might send to her? Why was it that she was so much greater a coward now than she had been then? Then she had expected defeat, for her friends had bade her not to be sanguine; but in spite of that she had borne up and gone gallantly through the ordeal. But now she felt that if Orley Farm were hers to give she would sooner abandon it than renew the contest. Then, at that former period of her life, she had prepared her mind to do or die in the cause. She had wrought herself up for the work, and had carried it through. But having done that work, having accomplished her terrible task, she had hoped that rest might be in store for her.

As she rose from her bed on the morning after her interview with Sir Peregrine, she determined that she would seek counsel from him

in whose counsel she could trust. Sir Peregrine's friendship was more valuable to her than that of Mr. Furnival, but a word of advice from Mr. Furnival was worth all the spoken wisdom of the baronet, ten times over. Therefore she wrote her letter, and proposed an appointment; and Mr. Furnival, tempted as I have said by some evil spirit to stray after strange goddesses in these his blue-nosed days, had left his learned brethren at their congress in Birmingham, and had hurried up to town to assist the widow. He had left that congress, though the wisest Rustums of the law from all the civilized countries of Europe were there assembled, with Boanerges at their head, that great, old, valiant, learned, British Rustum, inquiring with energy, solemnity, and caution, with much shaking of ponderous heads and many sarcasms from those which were not ponderous, whether any and what changes might be made in the modes of answering that great question, 'Guilty or not guilty?' and that other equally great question, 'Is it meum or is it tuum?' To answer which question justly should be the end and object of every lawyer's work. There were great men there from Paris, very capable, the Ulpians, Tribonians, and Papinians of the new empire, armed with the purest sentiments expressed in antithetical and magniloquent phrases, ravishing to the ears, and armed also with a code which, taken in its integrity, would necessarily, as the logical consequence of its clauses, drive all injustice from the face of the earth. And there were great practitioners from Germany, men very skilled in the use of questions, who profess that the tongue of man, if adequately skilful, may always prevail on guilt to disclose itself; who believe in the power of their own craft to produce truth, as our forefathers believed in torture; and sometimes with the same result. And of course all that was great on the British bench, and all that was famous at the British bar was there,—men very unlike their German brethren, men who thought that guilt never should be asked to tell of itself,—men who were customarily but unconsciously shocked whenever unwary guilt did tell of itself. Men these were, mostly of high and noble feeling, born and bred to live with upright hearts and clean hands, but taught by the peculiar tenets of their profession to think that that which was high and noble in their private intercourse with the world need not also be so esteemed in their legal practice. And there were Italians there, good-humoured, joking, easy fellows, who would laugh their clients in and out of their difficulties; and Spaniards, very grave and serious, who doubted much in their minds whether justice might not best be bought and sold; and our brethren from the United States were present also, very eager to show that in this country law, and justice also, were clouded and nearly buried beneath their wig and gown.

All these and all this did Mr. Furnival desert for the space of

twenty-four hours in order that he might comply with the request of Lady Mason. Had she known what it was that she was calling on him to leave, no doubt she would have borne her troubles for another week,—for another fortnight, till those Rustums at Birmingham had brought their labours to a close. She would not have robbed the English bar of one of the warmest supporters of its present mode of practice, even for a day, had she known how much that support was needed at the present moment. But she had not known; and Mr. Furnival, moved by her woman's plea, had not been hard enough in his heart to refuse her.

When she entered the room she was dressed very plainly as was her custom, and a thick veil covered her face; but still she was dressed with care. There was nothing of the dowdiness of the lone lorn woman about her, none of that lanky, washed-out appearance which sorrow and trouble so often give to females. Had she given way to dowdiness, or suffered herself to be, as it were, washed out, Mr. Furnival, we may say, would not have been there to meet her;—of which fact Lady Mason was perhaps aware.

‘I am so grateful to you for this trouble,’ she said, as she raised her veil, and while he pressed her hand between both his own. ‘I can only ask you to believe that I would not have troubled you unless I had been greatly troubled myself.’

Mr. Furnival, as he placed her in an arm-chair by the fireside, declared his sorrow that she should be in grief, and then he took the other arm-chair himself, opposite to her, or rather close to her,—much closer to her than he ever now seated himself to Mrs. F. ‘Don't speak of my trouble,’ said he, ‘it is nothing if I can do anything to relieve you.’ But though he was so tender, he did not omit to tell her of her folly in having informed her son that she was to be in London. ‘And have you seen him?’ asked Lady Mason.

‘He was in Harley Street with the ladies last night. But it does not matter. It is only for your sake that I speak, as I know that you wish to keep this matter private. And now let us hear what it is. I cannot think that there can be anything which need really cause you trouble.’ And he again took her hand,—that he might encourage her. Lady Mason let him keep her hand for a minute or so, as though she did not notice it; and yet as she turned her eyes to him it might appear that his tenderness had encouraged her.

Sitting there thus, with her hand in his,—with her hand in his during the first portion of the tale—she told him all that she wished to tell. Something more she told now to him than she had done to Sir Peregrine. ‘I learned from her,’ she said, speaking about Mrs. Dockwrath and her husband, ‘that he had found out something about dates which the lawyers did not find out before.’

'Something about dates,' said Mr. Furnival, looking with all his eyes into the fire. 'You do not know what about dates?'

'No; only this; that he said that the lawyers in Bedford Row——'

'Round and Crook.'

'Yes; he said that they were idiots not to have found it out before; and then he went off to Groby Park. He came back last night; but of course I have not seen her since.'

By this time Mr. Furnival had dropped the hand, and was sitting still, meditating, looking earnestly at the fire while Lady Mason was looking earnestly at him. She was trying to gather from his face whether he had seen signs of danger, and he was trying to gather from her words whether there might really be cause to apprehend danger. How was he to know what was really inside her mind; what were her actual thoughts and inward reasonings on this subject; what private knowledge she might have which was still kept back from him? In the ordinary intercourse of the world when one man seeks advice from another, he who is consulted demands in the first place that he shall be put in possession of all the circumstances of the case. How else will it be possible that he should give advice? But in matters of law it is different. If I, having committed a crime, were to confess my criminality to the gentleman engaged to defend me, might he not be called on to say: 'Then, O my friend, confess it also to the judge; and so let justice be done. *Ruat cœlum*, and the rest of it?' But who would pay a lawyer for counsel such as that?

In this case there was no question of payment. The advice to be given was to a widowed woman from an experienced man of the world; but, nevertheless, he could only make his calculations as to her peculiar case in the way in which he ordinarily calculated. Could it be possible that anything had been kept back from him? Were there facts unknown to him, but known to her, which would be terrible, fatal, damning to his sweet friend if proved before all the world? He could not bring himself to ask her, but yet it was so material that he should know! Twenty years ago, at the time of the trial, he had at one time thought,—it hardly matters to tell what, but those thoughts had not been favourable to her cause. Then his mind had altered, and he had learned,—as lawyers do learn—to believe in his own case. And when the day of triumph had come, he had triumphed loudly, commiserating his dear friend for the unjust suffering to which she had been subjected, and speaking in no low or modified tone as to the grasping, greedy cruelty of that man of Groby Park. Nevertheless, through it all, he had felt that Round and Crook had not made the most of their case.

And now he sat, thinking, not so much whether or no she had been in any way guilty with reference to that will, as whether the

counsel he should give her ought in any way to be based on the possibility of her having been thus guilty. Nothing might be so damning to her cause as that he should make sure of her innocence, if she were not innocent; and yet he would not ask her the question. If innocent, why was it that she was now so much moved, after twenty years of quiet possession?

‘It was a pity,’ he said, at last, ‘that Lucius should have disturbed that fellow in the possession of his fields.’

‘It was; it was!’ she said. ‘But I did not think it possible that Miriam’s husband should turn against me. Would it be wise, do you think, to let him have the land again?’

‘No, I do not think that. It would be telling him, and telling others also, that you are afraid of him. If he have obtained any information that may be considered of value by Joseph Mason, he can sell it at a higher price than the holding of these fields is worth.’

‘Would it be well——?’ She was asking a question and then checked herself.

‘Would what be well?’

‘I am so harassed that I hardly know what I am saying. Would it be wise, do you think, if I were to pay him anything, so as to keep him quiet?’

‘What; buy him off, you mean?’

‘Well, yes;—if you call it so. Give him some sum of money in compensation for his land; and on the understanding, you know——,’ and then she paused.

‘That depends on what he may have to sell,’ said Mr. Furnival, hardly daring to look at her.

‘Ah; yes,’ said the widow. And then there was another pause.

‘I do not think that that would be at all discreet,’ said Mr. Furnival. ‘After all, the chances are that it is all moonshine.’

‘You think so?’

‘Yes; I cannot but think so. What can that man possibly have found among the old attorney’s papers that may be injurious to your interests?’

‘Ah! I do not know; I understand so little of these things. At the time they told me,—you told me that the law might possibly go against my boy’s rights. It would have been bad then, but it would be ten times more dreadful now.’

‘But there were many questions capable of doubt then, which were definitively settled at the trial. As to your husband’s intellect on that day, for instance.’

‘There could be no doubt as to that.’

‘No; so it has been proved; and they will not raise that point again. Could he possibly have made a later will?’

‘No; I am sure he did not. Had he done so it could not have

been found among Mr. Usbech's papers; for, as far as I remember, the poor man never attended to any business after that day.'

'What day?'

'The 14th of July, the day on which he was with Sir Joseph.'

It was singular, thought the barrister, with how much precision she remembered the dates and circumstances. That the circumstances of the trial should be fresh on her memory was not wonderful; but how was it that she knew so accurately things which had occurred before the trial,—when no trial could have been expected? But as to this he said nothing.

'And you are sure he went to Groby Park?'

'Oh, yes; I have no doubt of it. I am quite sure.'

'I do not know that we can do anything but wait. Have you mentioned this to Sir Peregrine?' It immediately occurred to Lady Mason's mind that it would be by no means expedient, even if it were possible, to keep Mr. Furnival in ignorance of anything that she really did; and she therefore explained that she had seen Sir Peregrine. 'I was so troubled at the first moment that I hardly knew where to turn,' she said.

'You were quite right to go to Sir Peregrine.'

'I am so glad you are not angry with me as to that.'

'And did he say anything—anything particular?'

'He promised that he would not desert me, should there be any new difficulty.'

'That is well. It is always good to have the countenance of such a neighbour as he is.'

'And the advice of such a friend as you are.' And she again put out her hand to him.

'Well; yes. It is my trade, you know, to give advice,' and he smiled as he took it.

'How should I live through such troubles without you?'

'We lawyers are very much abused now-a-days,' said Mr. Furnival, thinking of what was going on down at Birmingham at that very moment; 'but I hardly know how the world would get on without us.'

'Ah! but all lawyers are not like you.'

'Some perhaps worse, and a great many much better. But, as I was saying, I do not think I would take any steps at present. The man Dockwrath is a vulgar, low-minded, revengeful fellow; and I would endeavour to forget him.'

'Ah, if I could!'

'And why not? What can he possibly have learned to your injury?' And then as it seemed to Lady Mason that Mr. Furnival expected some reply to this question, she forced herself to give him one. 'I suppose that he cannot know anything.'

'I tell you what I might do,' said Mr. Furnival, who was still

musings. 'Round himself is not a bad fellow, and I am acquainted with him. He was the junior partner in that house at the time of the trial, and I know that he persuaded Joseph Mason not to appeal to the Lords. I will contrive, if possible, to see him. I shall be able to learn from him at any rate whether anything is being done.'

'And then if I hear that there is not, I shall be comforted.'

'Of course; of course.'

'But if there is——'

'I think there will be nothing of the sort,' said Mr. Furnival, leaving his seat as he spoke.

'But if there is—— I shall have your aid?' and she slowly rose from her chair as she spoke.

Mr. Furnival gave her a promise of this, as Sir Peregrine had done before; and then with her handkerchief to her eyes she thanked him. Her tears were not false as Mr. Furnival well saw; and seeing that she wept, and seeing that she was beautiful, and feeling that in her grief and in her beauty she had come to him for aid, his heart was softened towards her, and he put out his arms as though he would take her to his heart—as a daughter. 'Dearest friend,' he said, 'trust me that no harm shall come to you.'

'I will trust you,' she said, gently stopping the motion of his arm. 'I will trust you, altogether. And when you have seen Mr. Round, shall I hear from you?'

At this moment, as they were standing close together, the door opened, and Mr. Crabwitz introduced another lady—who indeed had advanced so quickly towards the door of Mr. Furnival's room, that the clerk had been hardly able to reach it before her.

'Mrs. Furnival, if you please, sir,' said Mr. Crabwitz.

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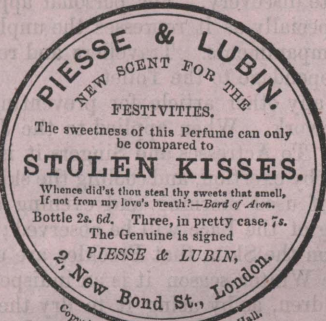
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1 7 0	1 14 0	2 11 0
0 7 6	0 11 0	0 13 6
0 9 6	0 13 0	0 15 6
0 7 6	0 11 0	0 13 6
0 3 0	0 4 0	0 6 0

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